The decisions are up to you!

- **You** make the decisions. The NRCS planner will give you many good alternatives and make some economic comparisons. However, you decide how, what, and when. It's your plan!
- Decisions are needed on both the uses of the land and its treatment. When you make a decision on land use, you will need to consider how to treat each field to get the desired results. These treatments are known as conservation practices. Several practices may be used in combination to solve resource problems, and collectively are called a resource management system.
- The NRCS planner can help you understand how the conservation practices fit together in a resource management system, and what is necessary to provide the maintenance for continued effectiveness in the future.
- The planner will record your decisions and will help in scheduling and applying planned conservation practices.
- The plan can be a guide for you for several years, and can be modified as your goals and objectives change.

Applying the conservation practices

Once planning decisions have been made, additional NRCS technical assistance to assist you in implementing the planned conservation practices can include engineering designs, operation and maintenance agreements, and standards and specifications. Federal, state and local permits are the responsibility of you the client, though NRCS can assist with certain information to support the permit applications.

Keeping your plan current

Your written conservation plan provides you with a ready reference guide for your year-to-year operations. Economics or other circumstances may change, and prevent you from following your conservation plan. NRCS conservationists can help you revise the plan when needed.

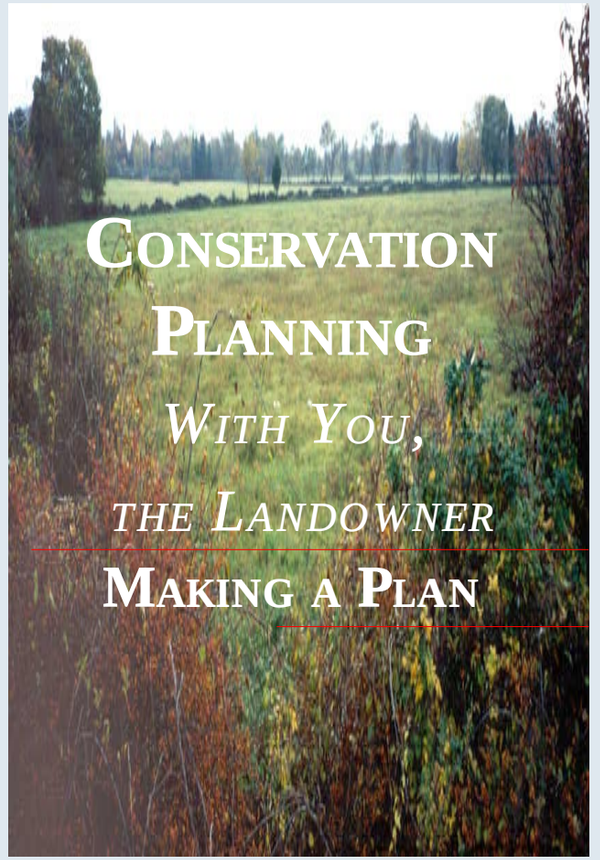
Remember, in conservation planning

- The process is voluntary and flexible.
- **You** make the decisions and carry them out, including maintenance.
- It is **your** plan for the land **you** own or use.
- NRCS is ready to help you.

Before, barnyard waste a detriment for livestock health and water quality.

After, manure storage structure with concrete livestock loafing area.

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service



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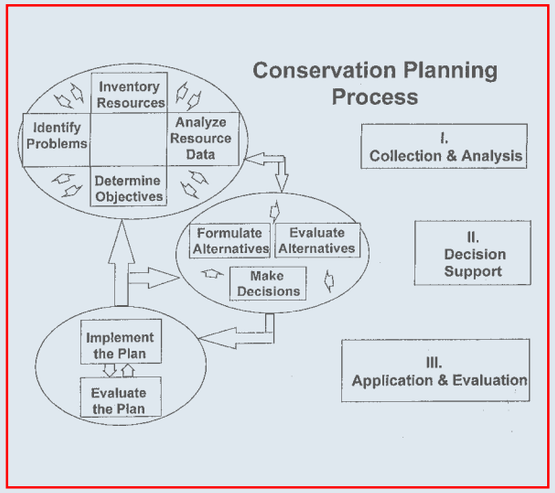
*The success of conservation planning depends on you, the landuser being involved in every phase of the process. The decisions made are **your** decisions! Technically trained NRCS planners will help you reach informed decisions about soil, water, air, plants, and animal resources while considering human, social and economic concerns.....*



What is a Conservation Plan?

A conservation plan is a customized document that outlines the use and best management practices of the natural resources on public or private lands. The plan defines and explains the resources in a simple, easy to understand manner. Typically, the plan will include land use maps, soils information, inventory of resources, engineering notes, and other supporting information. You, the landuser, make **all** the decisions, but do not have to tackle resource problems alone.

Farm Viability

A conservation plan can result in more viable and productive land, earning the farmer a higher income. Farm plans help to keep farmers farming!

Who needs a conservation plan?

Farmers and landusers on public or private land that want to achieve a healthy working landscape; landusers that participate in one of NRCS's many programs must have a plan or be developing one, before or during enrollment. However, you do not need to be enrolled in NRCS programs to obtain a conservation plan.

Consider why you may need a conservation plan

NRCS can help you develop a conservation plan one step at a time, while looking at the whole parcel of land. Remember, there is no cost to you, the landuser.

- Would you like the opportunity to enhance the natural resources on your land?
- Do you have muddy runoff, carrying precious soil nutrients and water away?
- Is your barnyard full of mud and manure?
- Are your gullies growing and difficult to cross?
- Do you see sediment accumulations at the lower part of your land or field?
- Are your fields less productive now than they once were?
- Is your property providing wildlife habitat?
- Is your livestock creating an environmental problem in the watershed?
- Do you need more and more fertilizer and water to sustain yields?
- Are there invasive species where once native species and productive pastureland thrived?
- Do you need to comply with certain regulations?

Making a Plan

When you are ready to start a conservation plan, a NRCS planner will meet with you to discuss your goals, plans, resource problems, the soils, and the NRCS's conservation programs. The planner will ask which crops you want to grow, the livestock you want to keep, the wildlife or recreation uses you want to plan, and any other interests you have that will affect the land. The planner will help you consider the effects a planned practice may have on a neighboring farm or parcel of land. Think on-site as well as off-site.

The first step in developing a conservation plan is to gather information for a resource inventory such as:

- nutrient management, which can include manure and wastewater
- irrigation water management
- erosion estimates
- topographic maps, geologic and other maps/inventories
- soil maps

The next step, the planner will help you address all land-use designations at a sustainable level, such as:

- cropland, forestland, and hay and pasture land
- recreation areas
- water resources, both quality and quantity
- wildlife habitat
- natural or sceinic areas
- dwellings - barns, barnyard paddocks/pens manure storage structures and other areas